United Nations A/AC.198/1997/2/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 April 1997

Original: English

Committee on Information
Nineteenth session
13-19 May and
2-9 September 1997

Substantive questions

Evaluation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly his comments on the report entitled "Evaluation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library" (A/AC.198/1997/2).

97-10425 (E) 290497 020597

Comments of the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has studied the report on the evaluation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library prepared by two consultants. The Secretary-General is pleased to note that many of the recommendations contained in the report endorse initiatives already under way in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Those initiatives were undertaken to maximize the use of cost-effective technological innovations and to ensure the optimal use of existing resources. The Secretary-General would like to bring to the attention of the Committee on Information the fact that a number of recommendations made by the consultants contain financial implications. Should the Committee on Information and the General Assembly decide to take action on the recommendations contained therein, the Department of Public Information would make every effort to implement those recommendations through the redeployment of existing resources or through extrabudgetary funding.

2. Specific comments on each recommendation follow.

Recommendation 1. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation.

Recommendation 2. Proficiency in English must be an essential criterion for the position of an indexer. Since most indexers are recruited at the entry levels (P-2/P-3) through the national competitive examination or the G-to-P examination, their proficiency in the English language would be evaluated as part of the examination process.

Recommendation 3. Quality control measures are in place and are added as resources permit. Additional measures will be added when the Integrated Library Management System becomes fully operational.

Recommendation 4. This effort has already been initiated and will continue, when warranted.

Recommendation 5. Confidential or sensitive information is not placed on the Intranet. This recommendation does not, however, pertain to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library alone. The security of passwords is administered by the Office of Conference and Support Services.

Recommendation 6. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. Since the subscriptions to that type of information have rapidly increased in cost, the Department of Public Information continues its efforts to identify additional sources of funding from within existing resources or, where feasible, from voluntary contributions to help provide this and other electronic information services to all Member States and to the Secretariat.

Recommendation 7. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation.

Recommendation 8. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation, where warranted. However, this is not a pressing issue at a time of limited financial resources. A continuous weeding of external materials can relieve the crowding in the collection of materials from intergovernmental organizations and the specialized agencies and obviate the need for extensive compact shelving. Furthermore, the Buildings Management Service of the Office of Conference and Support Services has expressed the opinion that the library building structure was not designed to support compact shelving, which is very heavy.

Recommendation 9. The Secretary-General takes note of this recommendation. The cooperation of all the concerned Secretariat offices at Headquarters and in the field will be sought to determine the feasibility of this proposal. For countries without a United Nations office, Internet access is a prerequisite. In addition and wherever feasible, extrabudgetary resources will be actively sought to enhance the access of depository libraries to electronic information provided by the United Nations.

Recommendation 10. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. Every three years, a specific area of library services (reference services, serials use, use of specialized agency materials, etc.) should be surveyed.

Recommendation 11. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation.

Recommendation 12. The Secretary-General takes note of this recommendation. The proposal for a cost-recovery scheme for photocopying and extensive on-line searches and printouts provided by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will be reviewed within the context of the Secretary-General's reform measures for reducing the Organization's overall administrative costs.

Recommendation 13. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation.

Recommendation 14. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. Tracking systems in the Integrated Library Management System are an excellent tool to assist in determining cutbacks. Systems development staff of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will assist in developing such reports if they are not readily available in Horizon. Until that time, however, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will continue to review serials for cancellation manually.

Recommendation 15. The Secretary-General takes note of this recommendation, The preservation of United Nations

documents and publications is an essential function of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. However, opinions vary as to what constitutes a preserved record in the information field. The Information Technology Coordinating Committee, of which the Dag Hammarskjöld Library is a member, should consider the question of longevity of media and advise on its suitability for archival storage before microfiching is reintroduced. Binding of the hard copy of United Nations documents will continue and is already outsourced.

Recommendation 16. The Secretary-General takes note of this recommendation, Existing resources will not, however, permit this. Voluntary contributions could assist in launching such an undertaking.

Recommendation 17. The Secretary-General is pleased to inform the Committee that the provisions of this recommendation are being implemented.

Recommendation 18. The Secretary-General is pleased to inform the Committee that the provisions of this recommendation are being implemented.

Recommendation 19. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. It should be noted that the Office of Conference and Support Services, which has the primary responsibility for teleconferencing, is already expanding the use of that medium.

Recommendation 20. Efforts are already under way to expedite the process to make the Integrated Library Management System fully functional during 1997, as also mentioned in recommendation 23 below.

Recommendation 21. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation, to the extent that its implementation is possible within existing resources. The current staff complement as shown in the proposed 1998-1999 budget is a good starting point. The staff resources allocated to the Electronic Resource Development Section will be reviewed after a period of time.

Recommendation 22. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. In the proposed 1998-1999 budget, one staff member has been added to this function.

Recommendation 23. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation, Current plans are to make the Integrated Library Management System fully functional during calendar year 1997. The acquisitions module is currently functional, while the other modules are scheduled to become functional in the coming months.

Recommendation 24. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. Additional personal computers were made available during 1996, and funds for personal computers have been requested in the proposed 1998-1999 budget, pending approval by the General Assembly.

Recommendation 25. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation and is pleased to inform the Committee on Information that it is being implemented on an ongoing basis. Funds have been requested in the proposed 1998-1999 budget to replace obsolete equipment, pending approval by the General Assembly.

Recommendation 26. The Secretary-General concurs that a balance between the availability of printed and non-printed material should continue to be maintained.

Recommendation 27. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation and would like to reiterate that communication among and training of staff have always been encouraged.

Recommendation 28. The Secretary-General agrees that future recruitment should emphasize knowledge and skills in information technology, in conjunction with substantive knowledge and education in librarianship. Academic programmes for specialists in library and information technology are continually changing, especially owing to the emerging importance of the Internet and related technologies. Additionally, because of its rapidly changing nature, the process of acquiring new information technology skills is a constant necessity, not just for new recruits, but also for longer-serving staff.